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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 06/21/07

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's daily schedule

- 4) Coordination going on for visit to Japan by President Bush in September

Diet action:

- 5) Bill extending the Iraq Special Measures Law allowing ASDF dispatches is passed by the Diet
- 6) By passing the amended Iraq Special Measures Law, Government desires to maintain the status quo with the US until the presidential election next fall
- 7) Abe administration's desire to stress policy emphasis on US by passing extension of Iraq dispatch bill
- 8) Three labor bills stalled with gap wide between two chambers of the Diet; NSC bill put on hold
- 9) After six-year hiatus, a vote of no-confidence launched against Lower House speaker Yohei Kono

North Korea problem:

- 10) Assistant Hill reiterates likelihood of six-party talks restarting early July
- 11) Japan concerned that is priority abduction issue will get short shrift in the restarted six-party talks
- 12) China's Hu government clams up on "anti-Japanese rhetoric" as it roles out the red carpet for visiting Nakasone delegation

13) With no progress in sight, Farm Minister Akagi breaks short his first trip abroad on WTO matters

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri & Tokyo Shimbun

Diet enacts legislation to extend Iraq mission for two years, to reform education system

Nikkei:

Social insurance Agency to check all 270 million pension records

Sankei:

Tokyo District Court questions Chongryon vice chairman over purchase deal

Akahata:

SDF monitors JCP gatherings in nasty manner

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) Extension of Diet session: Forcible attitude too much to tolerate

(2) Spa blast: Danger hidden in "nature" in cities

Mainichi:

(1) Spa blast: Government urged to map out natural gas safety measures

(2) Three education laws must be applied properly

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Yomiuri:

(1) Substance should be given to three education laws

(2) Spa blast: Urgently establish guidance, surveillance system

Nikkei:

(1) Split of Palestine: Reconstruction of peace process urged

(2) Revised education laws should be applied flexibly

Sankei:

(1) Spa blast: Safety indispensable for healing

(2) Revised education laws: Meaning of education boards' existence questioned

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Extension of Diet session: Risky gamble of anxious prime minister

(2) Three education laws: Don't weaken the classroom

Akahata:

(1) Three education laws: We won't tolerate state intervention on strength of Constitution

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, June 20

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)

June 21

10:24

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Suzuki at the Kantei.

11:40

Met with Lower House member Taro Nakayama.

12:44

Handed over official recommendation certificates to prospective candidate for Upper House proportional- representation constituencies. Aoki, head of the LDP caucus in the Upper House, and Katayama, secretary general of LDP members in the Upper House.

12:50

Arrived at the Kantei.

13:43

Lower House plenary session.

14:09

A meeting to honor memory of former Lower House member Motoo Shiina at ANA Intercontinental Hotel Tokyo.

14:51

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matoba at the Kantei.

15:02

Met with National Police Agency Uruma.

16:02

Met with Seiken Sugiura, chairman of the LDP Doshu or Regional Bloc System.

16:25

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Met with Finance Minister Omi, Vice Finance Minister Fujii, followed by Internal Affairs Minister Suga. Then met with Lower House member Tsutomu Takebe.

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17:12

Local Treasure Discovery Contest hosted by the Cabinet Office.

18:10

Meeting held at Urban Center Hotel to report on the Heiligendamm Summit on the global warming issue.

18:38 Returned to the official residence.

4) Bush visit eyed for September

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)

June 21, 2007

The Japanese and US governments yesterday entered into coordination for US President Bush to visit Japan in early September, a Japan-US diplomatic source revealed. Bush last visited Japan in November 2005 and will make his first visit to Japan since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came into office. In their scheduled meeting, Abe and Bush are expected to talk about global warming, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, and the Darfur strife in the Sudan.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum is to meet in Sydney on Sept. 8-9, and Bush is to stop over in Japan around the time of a summit meeting of APEC leaders. Bush will make his fourth visit to Japan.

The United States agreed in the recent summit of Group of Eight (G-8) leaders in Heiligendamm to create a new framework to cut greenhouse gas emissions in 2013 and afterward for the post-Kyoto Protocol setup. However, the United States has frowned on setting up a definite numerical benchmark.

In July next year, Japan will host the G-8 summit to be held at Lake Toya in Hokkaido. "On that occasion," a senior official of the Foreign Ministry says, "the United States' cooperation is indispensable for an agreement." Abe therefore wants to exchange in-depth views with Bush.

Meanwhile, the United Nations General Assembly is to meet in New York in mid-and late September, and the United Nations will host a high-level meeting to discuss climate change. Abe will attend both events, thinking to make an appeal again on his positive stance over environmental issues.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party is expected to fight an uphill battle in this summer's election for the House of Councillors. Abe

wants ride out the election and would like to meet Bush in a stabilized political situation.

5-1) Bill extending Iraq mission for two years and three education reform bills clear Diet

MAINICHI (Top play) (Excerpts)
June 21, 2007

The bill amending the Iraq Special Measures Law and three education reform bills were endorsed at the Upper House plenary session

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yesterday and enacted with a majority vote by the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito. The government and the ruling camp intend to take a vote next week on Social Insurance Agency (SIA) reform bills and the bill lifting the statute of limitations on pension claims in line with its plan to extend the current Diet session for 12 days. The opposition camp, determined to continue pursuing the government's responsibility for the question of "lost pension payments," plans to submit a no-confidence motion against the cabinet timed with a vote on the SIA bill.

LDP President Shinzo Abe, who is also prime minister, held a meeting yesterday with his New Komeito counterpart, Akihiro Ota, and reached an agreement to extend the Diet session for 12 days. The planned extension is likely to clear a Lower House plenary session on June 22. As a result, the House of Councillors election, initially planned for July 22, will take place a week later, on July 29. Meanwhile, the Diet affairs chiefs of three opposition parties -- the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ), the Social Democratic Party, and the People's New Party -- confirmed yesterday a line of opposing the Diet extension.

In addition, the Upper House Diet affairs chiefs of the three opposition parties and the Japanese Communist Party met yesterday ahead of the Upper House plenary session and confirmed a plan to submit a motion demanding Education, Culture and Science Committee Chairman Yasu Kano and Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chairman Tadashi Taura, who had taken votes on the Iraq bill and the three education reform bills without obtaining the opposition camp's concurrence, be dismissed from the posts. The DPJ consequently submitted the motion but it was voted down by the ruling bloc. This was followed by the Upper House endorsement of the Iraq and education reform legislations.

The Iraq legislation was necessary to extend the law, which is to expire July 31, for two years. The law has been the legal basis for the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift mission, which has been in place even after the Ground Self-Defense Force left southern Iraqi city of Samawah last July.

5-2) ASDF's activities to be extended for one year

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
June 21, 2007

Following the enactment of the revised Iraq Special Measures Law, the government intends to make a cabinet decision in July on extending for one year the basic plan specifying the specific activities of the Air Self-Defense Force. Although the government had also considered extending the plan for six months in view of the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, it has decided on a one-year extension so as not to hamper the ASDF's support mission.

The government, however, has yet to come up with any specific timeline for withdrawal. Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma told reporters yesterday: "We cannot make a decision unless we review the whole situation, such as the international community, the security situation, and the effect of the US troop increase." Given the situation, the Lower House has passed an additional resolution requiring: (1) a study of an exit strategy, and (2) disclosing information on civilian control.

With the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law governing the Maritime

Self-Defense Force's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean scheduled to expire in November, the propriety of extending the law is likely to be discussed in the fall extra Diet session. There are objections in the Liberal Democratic Party about enacting a special measures law each time for deploying the SDF's overseas. The debate on establishing a permanent law on the SDF's overseas missions might gain momentum.

6) Iraq aid: Focus on ASDF's exit strategy

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)
June 21, 2007

A bill to revise the Iraq Reconstruction Assistance Special Measures Law cleared the House of Councillors in its plenary sitting yesterday. Under the now-revised law, the Air Self-Defense Force's current airlift activities in Iraq will be continued over the next two years. In Iraq, public security is not expected to be recovered with religious sectarian conflicts intensifying. The focus, looking ahead into the future, is on what kind of exit strategy the government will map out to withdraw the ASDF.

"If they (ASDF) had to return home suddenly, that would have become an internationally serious problem. I'm happy." So saying, Defense Minister Kyuma looked relieved yesterday with the special measures law's revision. Meanwhile, another question from reporters was about when to recall the ASDF. "I don't know," Kyuma said, adding: "I can't make a judgment until I see the whole situation, such as how the international community will work for Iraq and what will become of public security in Iraq." With this, Kyuma admitted that he could not look ahead into the future.

The ASDF, with its detachment based in Kuwait, has been engaged in the task of assisting Iraq with its reconstruction under the government's masterplan based on the now-revised special measures law. The GSDF pulled out of Iraq in July last year. Since then, the ASDF has been tasked primarily with airlifting personnel and supplies for US-led multinational forces. The government has not disclosed details about the ASDF's activities in Iraq for security and other reasons. However, one SDF officer has confessed that 80 % to 90 % are armed US troops and other multinational force troops.

In Diet deliberations on the revised law, opposition parties insisted on the ASDF's early pullout. There were similar voices from within the ruling coalition as well. Hiroshi Takano, a House of Councillors member of New Komeito, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner, said: "If there is a change of administration in the United States, I think we're going to withdraw the ASDF. We need to work out an exit strategy."

However, the ASDF's Iraq mission is a symbol of Japan's contributions to Iraq's reconstruction. The government therefore can hardly say Japan will pull the ASDF troops out of Iraq as long as public security in Iraq does not deteriorate to excess.

7) ASDF deployment in Iraq to be extended for another two years with enactment of bill revising Iraq Special Measures Law, but no "exit strategy" in sight

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Abridged)
June 21, 2007

Following the passage of the bill to extend the Iraq Special Measures Law for two years, the government will decide in July on a basic plan for air-refueling service in Iraq by the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF). The government initially planned to extend the term of the ASDF deployment in Iraq for a half year from August, but it changed this plan from a half year to one year. This length of the extension is to be included in the basic plan. The deployment of Japanese troops in Iraq, which Prime Minister Shinzo Abe inherited

from his predecessor Koizumi administration, has become the "symbol of Japan's emphasis on the United States. Because of this circumstance, it is difficult for Abe to chart an "exit strategy," which will include the conditions for a pullout of Japanese troops from Iraq and in what way the pullout will be made.

"We can't make a decision without taking into consideration the international situation, the security situation in Iraq, the effect of a troop increase by the US military, and the like," Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma said in response to a question about an exit strategy by reporters in the Diet after the passage of the bill. On the previous day, Kyuma also commented: "We'll keep them deployed there for a while. We'll do so in a matter-of-fact manner." While showing special consideration to the US, which has been put in a bind over its Iraq policy, Japan exposes the lack of its strategy.

The ASDF started air-refueling service in March 2004. At present, the ASDF operates under a 200-man structure to transport, for instance, pharmaceuticals and United Nations officials to Baghdad or the northern Iraqi city Arbil. The total times of transport topped 500 times and the volume transported exceeded 500 tons. But during the past month, the times of transport were no more than 13 and the weight amounted to only 1.3 tons. A senior Foreign Ministry official, however, emphasized: "Although the volume of transport is not so large, it is significant to participate in reconstruction assistance."

Given that there is more than one year before the US presidential election set for November 2008, "It's unthinkable that the US troops will pull out from Iraq immediately," one official of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) said. The reason why Japan changed its initially-planned term of extension of a half year to one year is officially said to be avoid complicated procedures. But this change also reflects the government's ulterior motive of emphasizing its attitude of attaching importance to the US for a little longer. One national defense lobbyist lawmaker of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) made this prediction: "Japan can't withdraw its troops from Iraq before President Bush steps down."

8) Lower, Upper House remain divided over three labor bills

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
June 21, 2007

Senior members of the ruling coalition, including Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Nakagawa and New Komeito Secretary General Kitagawa, met at a Tokyo hotel yesterday and discussed how to deal with pending bills after the Diet session is extended. They agreed to continue to discuss legislation for a Japanese-version national security council (NSC) and other key bills. On labor-related three bills, however, they remained divided. The Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) and the House of Representatives want to enact the bills out of desire to underscore in the House of Councillors

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election campaign policymaking achievements for workers, while the Upper House asserts it is impossible to handle more bills.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki said regarding the three labor bills in a press conference yesterday: "We want to see the bills enacted in the current Diet session. The Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) and other political parties particularly deem the minimum wage bill as important legislation." Shiozaki and other Kantei members once gave up on passing the labor legislation through the current Diet session, giving priority to the passage of the bills to reform the Social Insurance Agency. Their about-face reflects their consideration to a strong call from Rengo, a support group of the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), to pass the legislation.

Major bills the ruling coalition plans to shelve in the current session

Japanese-version NSC bill Reorganize the current Security Council of Japan into a Japanese-version NSC. Strengthen the Kantei's function as control tower for foreign and security policies (April 6).

Broadcast reform bill Add a new administrative punishment that would authorize the internal affairs and communications minister to order a broadcasting station that caused a scandal, such as airing a fabricated program, to submit a plan to prevent a recurrence (April 6).

Pension unification bill Integrate the mutual pension program for public servants into the employees' pension program in 2010 (April 13).

Civil servant reform bill Strengthen regulations on the practice of former government officials finding employment in the private section and create a punishment on illegal approach by such bureaucrats to incumbents.

9) House Speaker Kono's "dovish line" baffled in failure to undertake coordination between ruling and opposition parties

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
June 21, 2007

Takenori Noguchi

"Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono has remonstrated the governing coalition against railroading bills, hasn't he?" Tsuneo Suzuki, member of the House of Representatives, who has acted together with Kono in the New Liberal Club and the former Kono faction of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), said in a rebuttal at a full session yesterday of the Lower House, when a no-confidence motion submitted by the opposition parties against the speaker was rejected by a majority from the governing coalition.

This motion was introduced against a speaker for the first time in six and a half years. The opposition parties submitted it because the governing bloc single-handedly adopted a no-confidence motion on June 18 against the chairperson of the Committee on Discipline, who belongs to the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto). This committee decides on the fate of lawmakers, for instance, by expelling them, so a senior Minshuto member concluded this development as "the case of the speaker rejecting parliamentary democracy."

Referring to it, Kono himself noted: "Something that should never

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occur by the nature of things has occurred." Caught in between the giant ruling coalition pursuing a tough line and the opposition parties increasing their confrontational stance, Kono, who emphasizes the importance of undertaking coordination to help the ruling and opposition parties to reach agreement, was simply baffled in pursuing a "dovish line."

10) Assistant Secretary Hill sees restart of six-party talks in early July

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpt)
June 21, 2007

Assistant Secretary of State Hill, who is the chief delegate to the six-party talks on the North Korea nuclear issue, told the press corps after his meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Yachi yesterday at the Foreign Ministry that he expected the talks to restart possibly in early July.

Hill noted, "China thinks we can get something going in early July," indicating his intention to coordinate among the other chief delegates and the like, while closely consulting with China, which chairs the talks. He said, "We may start the talks immediately after July 4 (the US' Independence Day holiday)."

He also indicated the possibility of a six-party foreign ministerial to be convened around the time of the ASEAN-ARF that will take place on August 2.

11) Six-party talks: As Upper House election approaches, government concerned about abduction issue being left behind

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)

June 21, 2007

In a bid to bring progress to the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear development issue, Japan and the US on June 19 started a two-day meeting to undertake full-fledged coordination of views. Visiting Assistant Secretary of State Hill told Japanese negotiators his hope to resume the talks as early as early July. However, there is deep-seated caution on the Japanese side about the suggestion in view of the lack of progress on the abduction issue.

Concern about the possibility of developments in the six-party talks affecting the upcoming Upper House election in a delicate manner is appearing in the Abe administration, which maintains a hard-line stance toward North Korea. Vice Foreign Minister Yachi yesterday once again conveyed Japan's position to Hill: "I believe you understand that bringing progress to the nuclear issue and settling the abduction issue are both important." Hill: "I understand that well."

Hill also met with Asia and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kenichiro Sasae on the previous evening. He told reporters after the meeting, "I want to create a base so that a forward-looking result can be obtained regarding the abduction issue."

However, Senior MOFA officials are cool toward Hill's comment with one saying, "Mr. Hill understands Japan's public opinion. However, there is no change in his desire to avoid being bound by Japan, which wants the US to make a settlement of the abduction issue a premise for removing North Korea from a list of state sponsors of

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terrorism."

When to hold the next round of the six-party talks will be determined with the intentions of North Korea and China taken into consideration. If it is held in July, there is a strong possibility of the meeting clashing with the campaign period for the Upper House election.

Prime Minister Abe plans to field Special Advisor to the Prime Minister Kyoko Nakayama, State Minister in charge of the abduction issue, in the LDP's proportional-representation constituency and make a public appeal of his enthusiasm to tackle the abduction issue.

Chances are that if discussion on measures to provide North Korea with energy assistance takes place at such a time, Japan, which makes progress in the abduction issue a premise for its extending assistance to that nation, may be urged to make concessions. One government official said, "Both the abduction and nuclear issues will affect the Upper House election, if no achievements are made. However, we cannot say that the next round of the talks should be held after the election."

Amid the Abe administration refusing to make a compromise, Yachi on the 18th told reporters: "Defining progress in the abduction issue and then discussing the energy assistance issue would not be productive."

12) Hu administration containing domestic anti-Japanese movements, keeps social stability ahead of the CCP's convention in this fall

YOMIURI (Page 7) (Excerpts)
June 21, 2007/06/21

Hiroyuki Sugiyama, Beijing

Chinese President Hu Jintao on June 19 expressed to the Japan-China Youth Friendship Delegation (led by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone), which was visiting Beijing, his determination to build better relations with Japan. This news was widely covered by Chinese media yesterday, helping his determination to be disseminated across the country. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Central Propaganda Department has also indicated it would calm down reports critical of Japan. The Hu administration appears to be trying to carefully contain movements of anti-Japanese groups that enable the masses to

mobilize in a way to shake up the society ahead of the 17th CCP convention set for this fall.

Red-carpet media reports on Nakasone-led delegation

The China Central Television (CCTV) yesterday aired the footage of a meeting between Hu and the Japan-China friendship delegation and a welcoming party for 10 minutes from the start of a 30-news program. Quoting Hu as saying, "China and Japan must step up cooperation on a bilateral basis, as well as on a regional and global basis," the program aired the footage of an entertainment part of the dinner party. The CCP's organ paper, the People's Daily, devoted two-thirds of the front page to stories about the delegation.

This year will mark the 35th anniversary of the diplomatic normalization of Japan-China relations, as well as the 70th anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which triggered the

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Sino-Japanese War, and the Nanjing Incident. Japan-China relations would be profoundly affected by which memorial day China will attach more importance. Hu apparently has chosen to attach importance to China-Japan friendship. The top leader's clear announcement of his policy would serve as "deterrent against behavior going against it," one Chinese official said.

According to an informed source, the CCP's Central Propaganda Department instructed news services not to report negative aspects of Japan at their discretion. As a result, senior members of news companies reportedly have become extremely cautious about carrying articles critical of Japan that could fan the flames of anti-Japanese sentiments. There are news reports critical of Japan, but they are "too modest to provoke anti-Japanese sentiments in China," the same source said.

The reason why China is stepping up its efforts to contain anti-Japanese movements is primarily because it concerns the stability of the administration from both a short-term to a long-term perspective.

13) Agriculture Minister Akagi suddenly decides to return home midway through his German visit

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
June 21, 2007

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Akagi, who has been visiting Germany for a Group of 4 ministerial meeting under the Doha Round (multilateral trade talks) at the World Trade Organization (WTO), has suddenly decided to return home. He explained that he made that decision because tension is growing in the Diet session, as can be seen in the fact that opposition parties are showing readiness to introduce a no-confidence motion against the cabinet. Akagi is visiting Germany in order to hold talks with G-4 cabinet ministers, but his first foreign visit since his inauguration as agriculture minister has apparently turned into a wasted effort.

He is expected to leave Germany on June 20 and arrive at Narita Airport on the 21st. He said that he made a certain degree of achievements through his visit to Germany. He appears to have made the decision, based on the judgment that it would not be wise to travel abroad when tension is mounting in the Diet and that since it would be difficult to hold separate talks, he should avoid being criticized as staying in Germany meaninglessly.

It is said that a ministerial meeting of the Group of 6 involving the G-4 nations plus Japan and Australia will be held in Germany around the 23rd. In that case, Akagi wants to visit Germany again. However, other participating countries are taking a cool approach to Japan with one minister saying, "The G-6 will become a venue for only explaining the outcome of the G-4 meeting." In addition, the ruling parties plan to enter into procedures for extending the Diet session.

DONOVAN